

How to Cite This Article: Sewani, R., Shabroz., & Bibi, N. (2023). Leading Successful Schools: Sharing the Wisdom (A Case Study into a Developing Country's Perspective). *Journal of Social Sciences Review*, 3(2), 765-774. <https://doi.org/10.54183/jssr.v3i2.314>



Leading Successful Schools: Sharing the Wisdom (A Case Study into a Developing Country's Perspective)

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Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring 2023)

Pages: 765 – 774

ISSN (Print): 2789-441X

ISSN (Online): 2789-4428

Key Words

Successful Schools, Leadership and Management Practices, Principal as a Successful Leader, School Management Committee

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Abstract: *Leading successful school Principals plays a vital role in the school environment. Successful school Principals as educational leaders dedicate significant time to educating school stakeholders on the primary objective of school reform. They provide structures that facilitate communication between schools and processes that enable school stakeholders to engage in truly participatory decision-making. The purpose of this study, which examined the role of successful school Principals' educational leadership and management practices, was to determine how Principals' leadership and management practices facilitate the transition to a successful school. The research was conducted using the experiences of three school Principals. The data were gathered utilizing a qualitative case study methodology, which included semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings indicated that Principals of schools made significant changes to transform their institutions into successful schools. The findings of this study are significant because they shed light on the relative strengths and weaknesses of successful school Principals' leadership and management practices in transforming schools, as well as on the additional support that Principals require to transform their schools. The study recommends the areas of schools as leading successful schools' leadership and management practices in order for schools the concept of schools to be more approachable to school stakeholders.*

Introduction

Pakistan is a developing country that faces a slew of obstacles in its efforts to improve its educational system. Local school education systems can be largely grouped into three types, despite their diversity: government-run, private-run, and community-based school systems. The traits of successful schools in any system include low staff and student turnover, consistently good or better student test scores, placement of students in reputable colleges, adequate facilities, positive parent-teacher-student engagement, overall school morale of all involved parties, and, most importantly, effective

leadership. In order to reform and raise the standard of other schools within their own system, successful schools across Pakistan are looking to copy their strategies. Schools that are successful exhibit excellent corporate behaviour, and they all have strong leadership at their heart. I'd like to highlight one such successful Pakistani school and its leadership for the purposes of this case study-style post (Ahmad, Ali, & Sewani, 2021: Ahmad, Sewani, & Ali 2021).

Literature Review

Successful and effective schools aim to provide an appropriate education for all their students without differentiation of their ages, abilities, genders, or economic classes. Schools achieve this aim through strong educational leadership and management, specific school development plans for improvement, and also by involving their communities and parents in the learning environment. To that goal, several educational reforms and school improvement campaigns were developed and executed during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2010s (Sewani, 2010; Ahmad & Hamid, 2021).

In order to effectively plan, organize, delegate, and coordinate school activities, successful leaders employ a variety of leadership styles in their daily operations. Using a variety of resources, they must be able to engage in the appropriate style of engagement at the appropriate time during a particular situation. Additionally, effective leaders need to possess a set of fundamental skills, including the ability to make decisions, solve problems, manage authority and influence, and build relationships with others, including co-workers, parents, and the greater community. As Kouzes and Posner (2016) point out, leadership is a mutually beneficial relationship between school administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and members of the community. This relationship between the stakeholders is critical for the effective functioning of their group dynamics. The authors conclude by saying that successful leaders possess these attributes, which enable them to effect change in the school and transform it into a successful school (Ahmad & Hamid, 2021).

Successful leaders are also aware that if they want to transform and bring about change in their schools, they must be committed to the principles of school accountability, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, community engagement, collegiality and teamwork, and

collaboration and cooperation (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2019).

According to Louis and Murphy (2017), leaders are proactive rather than reactive; they develop ideas rather than react to them. They approach goals in a personal and engaged manner. They exert influence on people by altering their moods, generating thoughts and expectations, and defining clear goals and objectives that guide the task's progress. People's ideas of what is desirable, possible, and essential have evolved as a result of this effect. Successful leaders encourage their stakeholders to work together to achieve shared goals in which they all believe. Successful school leadership entails changing the opinions and aspirations of all stakeholders, as well as transforming the schools themselves (Ahmad, Thomas, & Hamid, 2020).

In addition, Hubber (2010) highlights that effective leadership includes major social abilities, including lobbying, inter-group connections, team building, and inspiration without domination. A central purpose of successful leadership, according to OECD (2010), is to improve the individual and collective problem-solving capacities of organizational members in order to achieve school goals.

Successful leadership necessitates dedication to achieving common objectives. According to Bell et al. (2016), a successful leader places a strong emphasis on empowering colleagues in order to improve the school environment. Successful leaders facilitate effective systemic change through the empowerment of teachers and the advancement of teachers' skills and knowledge, working to make schools more efficient and successful through the efforts of their teams. In addition to this, they cultivate healthy relationships with both of their parents as well as other people in the community.

Hargreaves (2007) proposes a number of ways in which successful leadership is associated with advancement. They include: It can be observed when leaders:

- Arouse involvement among colleagues in viewing their tasks from fresh perspectives;
- Raise awareness of the team's and organization's mission and vision;
- Assist team members with an increased level of capabilities;
- Inspire fellow workers and adherents to take a glance outside their own preferences and toward those that will benefit all stakeholders as a whole rather than just themselves.

The goals of the organization, as well as what encourages stakeholders, need to be understood by successful leaders, and they need to work to build the ability of stakeholders in order to enable change.

Principals as Successful Leaders

Principals perform the role of successful leaders in their respective schools. Successful leaders strive to enhance their schools through student-centered learning, and in order to accomplish this, these leaders entail all school stakeholders in their efforts. They advance the capabilities of both students and teachers through teacher professional development activities, and they engage all school stakeholders in collaborative efforts to improve the quality of education (Bana & Sewani, 2012; Sewani & Kazimi, 2021; Ahmad, Sewani & Ali, 2021).

Successful leaders foster an environment in which the central emphasis is on student learning rather than on themselves. A school's overall effectiveness in successful schools includes the ongoing learning of students, teachers, and other members of the school's employees, as well as parents and members of the community. According to Murphy et al. (2007), a successful leader is one who evolves a positive school culture, offers opportunities for effective student engagement, fosters strong employee collaborative efforts and group cohesiveness, seeks extra resources, and strengthens connections between parents and teachers. This is reinforced by MacNeill and Silcox (2003), who

write that such leadership can occur in whole-school ownership of the teaching and learning improvements in their schools. Kools and Stoll (2016) argue that these consistent points of focus for leadership can help to create and foster a transformational culture school will reap the benefits of schools, which will aid in the transformation of schools into successful schools in the future.

These attributes address the influence of a successful leader in creating and communicating a dream, as well as inspiring and enabling the action of others in order to achieve that dream.

Methodology

Gathering qualitative information is an important tool for gaining insight into people's beliefs and actions (Creswell 2014). The information for this study was gathered through qualitative research methods, specifically unstructured interviews with Principals, teachers, and parents from three schools, in order to determine the extent to which successful educational leadership and management practices are being implemented. The data was collected from the different school systems of Karachi, Lahore, and Mountainous Areas of Pakistan, and information was gathered from each of them. These three schools were comprised of public, private, and community-based educational institutions.

Findings and Analysis

A case study of a Mountain School (pseudonym) is all that will be discussed here. The researcher gathered information from interviews with the principal, teachers, students, parents/community, and management, observing the principal, as well as reviewing relevant school documents. As Robson (2002) points out, the case study method from various methodological perspectives is commonly referred to as triangulation in the literature. The researcher listened to the tapes several times before typing the information. The researcher went over the

information several times before coding it. The researcher has applied systematic data analysis to all aspects of data management, from data collection to data analysis and from knowledge creation to knowledge transfer. It was also recognized the importance of constant review and interaction with the data; reading the data a number of times allowed me to notice major themes in the information.

Location

Mountain School is in a small village in Pakistan's High Mountains. Mountain School is exclusively for female students. This is a private institution. The physical condition of the school has greatly improved in recent years. A boundary wall was constructed, the grass was planted on the premises (which were empty and filthy), and the interiors were covered and maintained clean. The office of the principal was expanded and renovated, the staffroom was moved and reconstructed, and the examination hall was changed into a space that can be used for a variety of purposes. The placement of retractable chairs and classroom cleaning to facilitate group work. The classrooms are very well-appointed with charts and student work, which is also on show in the office of the principal.

Profile and Role of Principal

At this particular institution, the individual who held the position of principal was a man who had been in charge for close to three years. Before he went on to earn his Master of Arts in Teacher Education degree, he was employed as a teacher at this particular institution. The principal was extremely motivated and pleased with his current position. He derives a sense of fulfillment from assisting students and teachers in their learning and growth. He worked extremely hard to establish his credibility in the school by demonstrating to the teachers what he could provide them in the way of professional development. On his own, he planned several seminars and invited outside facilitators to do workshops with teachers. He couldn't accomplish

it without the education he'd worked so hard to get before being selected as the school's principal. His competence in teaching and learning is unquestionably tied to his own educational career as a school Principal.

Why is this a Successful School?

The principal believes that shared decision-making, empowerment, optimistic community engagement, and staff collaboration are among the most important aspects that contribute to the success of the school. Other important aspects include the spirit of teamwork and high-quality connections. Teachers were upset because members of the School Management Committee (SMC) would often go right into their classrooms to assess instruction. It was expected of each and every student to contribute to the overall success of the school; hence, each and every student possessed a feeling of responsibility and accountability for their own actions. The institution's use of the tagline "We sink or swim together" as part of its broader statement of vision is one of the principal's many significant observations.

The principal makes an effort to persuade a few of the teachers to attend SMC gatherings so they can see that the community is not disparaging them but rather is banding together to support them. The importance of community engagement, particularly with the mothers of the students, cannot be overstated. The principal's first impression of the school was that parents were only welcome to hear about their children's deficiencies, which he discovered to be a disappointment. The parents weren't given a sense of security, and they were singled out for criticism on a regular basis. They would be informed that their child is not performing well before a large group of people at school. In addition, he prepared a session for sixty mothers to which everyone was invited. The three-hour program included incredibly beneficial group exercises, conversations, and presentations and was attended by a large number of mothers.

In a nutshell, here's what the principal said:

In addition to creating this a good school, we initially focused on improving the instructors' perceptions. Their perspective toward students, as well as toward teaching and learning, must be upbeat and positive. Instead of being restricted or confined to the industrial approach that we should be able to achieve good results with, they are attempting to develop students on an all-around basis now. It's also important to note that teachers are concerned about their own academic and professional success and are continuously working to better themselves. Another thing to note is how motivated parents seem to be right now. We are currently in a little better situation than we were in the past thanks to the involvement of parents in their children's education, including attendance at school, visits, and sitting in my office to talk with me and discuss their issues. The students have also grown more assured. They are signing up with respectable groups. And currently, there are other competitions in which we have placed first both locally and internationally, which is why I think that our school can be regarded as unique.

The teachers' perspectives provide additional proof: "Our physical environment has altered significantly. Since there was no boundary wall when we first opened, anyone from outside was able to enter the school; now, that has changed. Another teacher commented on it, saying, "Our scores are currently good compared to the past. All of this is a result of our principal's efforts and those of his team. I'm not just referring to the principal when I say this; I'm referring to the entire team and their work. Our outcomes have improved because there are other others on our team who visit the school, teach there, and assist the pupils".

Management of Pedagogical Processes

It is the principal's responsibility to ensure highly effective teaching and learning. Before he became the principal, he took some classes at a reputable university where the topic of pedagogical leadership came up. He now thinks

that both students and teachers need to be in an environment that helps them learn and grow as professionals if they want to be successful. The principal went to a good university; he came up with the idea of having one teacher per class. At the moment, there is only one teacher for all of the subjects in the ECD classes. This is because one teacher can easily keep track of all the kids, and not having a different teacher for each class period, as was the case before, saves time for the kids. That has proven to be a successful transformation in the school environment. Each period, the senior classes have a different set of teachers. In the event that a student is having difficulty functioning in a class, the instructors will endeavour to settle the situation. If the kid finds this to be too challenging, the teachers will bring the issue up with the principal, who will provide the student with some guidance and suggestions. The parents will be invited to the school, if necessary, for a more in-depth discussion of the problems. "In the past, kids didn't pay much attention to their academics and were uninteresting, but now they are highly active and do. Simply compare the results from now with those from five years ago if you want to observe the change, according to the parent. (Parent).

The Teachers and the Training they receive

All of the teachers at this institution have completed some form of teacher education as well as extensive in-service professional development before joining the faculty. Students sat in groups and were able to interact with one another, representing a second distinguishing characteristic between this school and others. The principal's participation in collaborative learning seminars at a private university, as well as his successive workshops for school teachers, evidence demonstrates the positive impact of his professional development courses at the private university as well as his subsequent workshops for teachers at the school. He is also confident that teachers are doing a good job in the classroom and are not squandering their

students' time. He is always accessible to provide assistance and address any concerns that teachers may be experiencing.

Relationships with School Students

The principal also said that while participating in various training programs at various universities, "he had gained a great deal of knowledge about management and how teachers interact with students." He makes it quite apparent that he wants the university he attends to prioritize upholding a kind and non-threatening tone in the classroom and throughout the institution's culture.

Relationships with Parents and the Community

This school's vast and strong interactions with parents and the larger community are arguably its greatest distinctive characteristic. In addition to structured committees such as the SMC, there are a number of alternative ways to create ties with parents. As an example, the school doors are always open; you are welcome to visit, inquire about your children, and even sit in on a class to witness what is going on. Another method involves approaching the issue on a class-by-class basis. When we take this approach, we invite the parents and do special sessions just for them," said the principal.

"People in this village are always engaged in domestic and home tasks. The second is that because each Village Education Committee (VEC) member is chosen by each region, there is no friction between them because they are happy with the committee's members. We frequently call the parents to get their opinions on how to enhance the school. Frequently, our head held brief workshops for the parents. VEC and parents are thus fully aware of the school's predicament. VEC never takes significant actions without consulting and getting assistance from various community members. Similar to the previous year, VEC members asked various members of the community for assistance and donations for building the border wall. For the settlement and

timely repayment of the loan, they requested assistance and donations. Therefore, the community members constructed this fence around the school. In this way, the various community members personally take part in the various school projects. (Teacher).

All of these changes and new ideas are the results of the principal's work, whether they are changes to the building or to the way things are taught. Even he was able to solve the problem of teachers not coming to work. He hired 3 to 4 substitute teachers who were willing to work voluntarily, and he also hired teachers from the community who work as substitutes when a permanent teacher is sick. Before, there was no boundary wall; rainwater poured in through broken windows, shredded nets damaged the glass, and smashed doors. There was previously no means of ventilation. There is a lot of cold here in the winter and a lot of heat here in the summer. Because there is no ventilation system in the summer, students faint from the heat. But suddenly, everything is back to normal. He constructed a boundary wall and walkways, installed skylights, and installed ventilation systems and exhaust fans in each classroom. "The Principal is the only one who can bring about major changes and new ideas. (Parent).

Successful Leadership and School Improvement

The present principal's leadership and commitment to school reform should be considered when evaluating the school's achievements, especially those in the past three years. The following message on leadership was displayed on the principal's office bulletin board and is duplicated here:

There are five essential characteristics that educational leaders must possess.

- A higher moral purpose
- A comprehensive comprehension of the methodology underpinning change management
- The capacity to strengthen one's relationships with others

- The production of new knowledge and its widespread dissemination
- Creating a consistent tone and message (The Change Leadership by Michael Fullan in Educational Leadership, May 2002).

In other words, this demonstrates that the principal had a solid understanding of leadership literature, which he undoubtedly acquired while he was a student at the esteemed college. School leaders with a moral purpose, say Harber and Davies (2019), want to make a difference in the lives of their pupils. The principal made it abundantly clear that this was a top priority, and one of the ways he communicated this was by posting the school's mission statement prominently in his office. According to leadership literature, the concept of "vision" is prominent, and this vision, like his other visions, indicates that he is familiar with that literature as a result of the courses that he has taken. The following was the vision of the school:

This educational institution is my alma mater, and it is the kind of place where each and every student is given extraordinary opportunities and resources to achieve the best possible levels of academic accomplishment, social skills, moral and spiritual values, and overall physical health. This structure is characterized by a strong sense of teamwork among students, professors, and parents, exemplified by the slogan "sink or swim together. "Its distinguishing feature is that it is a center of excellence. The school is "committed to quality and merit."

Discussion

A Successful School Leader Demonstrates the Following Characteristics and Strategies

(a) An effective school leader demonstrates collective accountability and responsibility for school management. In the case of Mountain School, it seemed like the principal gave important jobs to other people in the school, like the department head, the supervisor, and others,

and made sure they were held accountable. Because decision-making and action-taking power were shared, there was a sense that everyone was responsible for how the school did. But this was always done within the limits or constraints set by the idea. On the other hand, the principal did not run away from his responsibilities. Instead, he gave them to others and made sure they would be held responsible for their choices and actions.

(b) A good school has a lot of freedom to do things on its own. It was clear that the principal was in charge of running the school and had been given responsibility, even though the amount of freedom in different parts of the school and in certain areas, like funds, varied. The institution took on most of the responsibility for how it ran. This study showed that schools that are part of open education systems and have a lot of freedom are the most effective. This finding fits with current global trends toward decentralization, simplification of bureaucratic structures in education systems, and a greater focus on school-based management.

(c) It is a major focus in this successful school to ensure that physical resources are effectively managed. In particular, we learned that the role of the principal in managing the school's physical assets is very important because, as the saying goes, "a good school looks good." Whether it's fixing up buildings and grounds, making sure there's enough classroom space, making sure there are libraries and labs, or even just making sure the bathrooms are clean, it seems like a successful school puts a lot of value on these things and gives them a lot of importance. It is essential that this area of the school is visible to everyone. Internally and externally, the construction of a boundary wall communicates the word that this school is successful.

(d) Successful schools place a strong emphasis on the management of teachers and the management of pedagogy. In this school, it is clear that teaching and learning are the most important things, and the principal was involved

in making this happen. Teachers' workshops were led by the principal with a lot of help from him or her. In fact, this emphasis on teaching and learning extends beyond administration into the domain of "pedagogical leadership," which is widely regarded as a defining characteristic of effective schools around the world.

(e) Due to highly effective communication, the principal of this exemplary school is always informed of current events. Despite the hierarchical character of the communication structure, the communication was intimate and decidedly non-hierarchical. In lieu of issuing orders to be carried out, as is possible in a hierarchical system, the principal engaged in conversations with his staff, students, and parents that permitted numerous opinions to emerge and be considered during decision-making processes. A symmetrical approach to communication yields clearer meaning comprehension than a hierarchical, "top-down" approach, which frequently distorts meaning through the exercise of power.

(f) In a decent school, parents may speak with the principal whenever they wish, but they do not have authority over the school. In this instance, it was clear that the school considered parents to be its most important stakeholders. They conferred on a regular basis with the principal and communicated with teachers via the principal. However, there was no evidence that parents played major roles in school administration. There were various methods for parents to become involved with the school, and the SMC assisted the institution in numerous ways. In particular, the school provided a formal method for parents and instructors to discuss their children's test performance.

(g) The principal of a successful school is an ebullient, well-educated individual with a strong commitment to the school and the teaching profession. According to the findings of the study, the Principal "plays a vital role" in the educational environment. It was discovered that the principal, in this instance, was an extremely

devoted individual who had gone to great lengths to obtain a respectable education prior to assuming the position of principal. Perhaps the issue of commitment is related to the principal's contextual information; if a person lacks confidence in their own expertise, they may not be able to provide the level of commitment required to be a successful Principal in their business. Principal's commitment was demonstrated in numerous ways, but most notably by the number of hours, he devoted each week to continue working for the school, community, or profession (Harris and Jones, 2017). He worked long hours and participated in a diversity of hobbies, including athletics and music, outside of school. As an educational authority in the community, the principal, for example, spends considerable time away from the school.

(h) In an effective school, curriculum development goes beyond textbooks and classroom instruction. In this instance, it appeared that significant efforts were made to link classroom learning with students' real-world experiences. Various strategies, including educational field trips to other institutions and communities, were employed to achieve this goal.

(i) The successful school engages in school development or advancement planning of some kind. A yearly emphasis on school development was adopted as part of this school's highly visible School Action Plan. Successful institutions must plan for the future to ensure sustained achievement. Despite the fact that successful schools achieve their successes in a variety of ways and with a variety of emphases, it is clear that they are not satisfied with merely their current successes; they also desire future success and have a vision of what that success might look like.

Conclusion and Recommendations

When choosing a Principal for a successful educational institution, some of the personal

attributes that should be taken into consideration include dedication, the ability to communicate effectively with others, a caring attitude, and leadership skills. Principals should be cautiously chosen on the basis of their abilities rather than simply rising through the ranks based on age and length of service in the system. Given the critical role played by Principals in the creation of successful schools, significant efforts should be made to recruit Principals who are fully competent.

Learning is clearly and consistently prioritized in successful schools, and the idea of a "learning community" emphasizes this. It emphasizes the idea of "community" and the idea that a successful school is a collection of people who learn together far more than other systems do. Everyone is seen as a learner with a strong sense of community and concern for others, which is the essence of what it is to be a member of a community of students, teachers, administrators, and even parents.

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